



November 2018

Welcome to Spark, the Tribe weekly parsha activity sheet for Children's Service Leaders across the United Synagogue communities.

Thank you for offering to run a service, for all the hard work that you put into it and for making a real difference to so many young people. The US is very proud of the numerous Children's Services that are run every week across the UK and this would not happen without you.

Spark gives you an overview of the weekly parsha, a song, an activity, discussion questions or D'var Torah linked to the parsha or important event that week. Every Children's Service will be different, in terms of how many participants there are, their age range, its length and the varying abilities of the children. Please read through the document and find the activities that will best suit the needs of your group. It is advisable to read it before Shabbat in case there is some preparation that may be needed in advance.

I hope you and the children at your service will benefit from Spark. Please be in touch if you have any queries, feedback or if we can be of any help. Thank you again for your amazing work.

With best wishes,  
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## MISHPATIM 5779

### Parsha Summary:

- The parsha contains many mitzvot, a selection of which has been included here. It starts with the laws of a Jewish servant. He is to work for six years, after which he can go free. Alternatively, he can decide to stay on as a servant forever.
- The penalties for physically injuring others are listed. An ox that gores a person to death is to be stoned. One may not dig pits in the public domain. Stealing an animal and then selling or slaughtering it incurs an extra penalty.
- The laws governing guardians and borrowers of objects are listed – the level of responsibility for losing or damaging the object varies according to the nature of the contract. Special emphasis is placed on not mistreating a widow or an orphan. It is forbidden to take interest when lending money.
- The mitzvah of pidyon haben (redemption of the first born) is repeated. It is forbidden to eat an animal which died without shechita (kosher slaughter). One must not favour the destitute in court. A stray ox or donkey should be returned to its owner.
- A judge has to avoid showing favour or taking bribes. For six years the Land is worked; in the seventh year (shemittah) it is prohibited to work it. The three pilgrim festivals – Pesach, Shavuot and Succot – are listed. There is a mitzvah to bring one's first fruits (bikurim) to the Temple. It is prohibited to cook meat and milk together.
- God says that He will send an angel to guide the nation in their conquest of the Land, helping them to destroy the host nations. They are warned not to emulate the idolatrous ways of those nations.

- The narrative now switches back to three days before the giving of the Torah (Rashi). Moshe builds 12 altars at the foot of Mount Sinai, one for each tribe, on which offerings are brought. Moshe sprinkles the blood of the offerings on the people, who famously proclaim “we will do and we will listen” (na’aseh ve’nishma). Moshe, Aharon, Nadav, Avihu and 70 elders see a very pure ‘vision’ of God. Moshe remains on Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights.

## Children's Service: Tot's – Year 3

- Tip: The information in the parsha summary above can be used as the basis of a quiz. Make sure if you do decide to have a quiz that it's inclusive and fair. Think through carefully before your service to decide if a quiz is a suitable activity for the dynamics of your group.

### **Activity : Shemittah**

#### **Part One:**

If you have an appropriate space ask the children to run/walk around when you tell them to start. When you call out a number such as, three, they should form groups of that number. Anyone not in a group is 'out'. Play the game a few times and ensure that you call out the number seven a couple of times.

#### **Part Two:**

Call out a number and ask the children to try and name as many Jewish things that are connected to that number as you can. For example:

3 = forefathers, foot festivals, prayer services.

10 = commandments, men to make a minyan, Days of Repentance.

7= weeks of the Omer, Shabbat, branches of the Menorah, Shivat Haminim, Noachide laws, Ushpizin.

**Ask:** Why have we been playing games all about numbers?

**Explain:** In Judaism the number seven is an important one. It usually marks time. We have seven days in a week, seven years in a cycle and so on. In the parsha this week it says:

“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce and in the seventh you shall leave it unattended and unharvested and the poor of your people shall eat.’ (Mishpatim 23: 10-11)

Explain to the children that in the parsha this week we are told to keep the mitzvah of Shemittah. That means that for six years we work the land but on the seventh we leave the land unharvested. In that year anyone would be free to eat the produce.

- Why do you think we are commanded to keep the mitzvah of Shmitta?
- How would a farmer feed his family during the Shmitta year?

## **Conclusion**

Play the game 'I am a farmer and I grow....' (Similar to 'I went to Israel and I took with me.....')

Sit in a circle. Child one says, "I am a farmer and I grow tomatoes." (They should choose a fruit or veg.) Child two says, "I am a farmer and I grow tomatoes and peas..." Play continues in this fashion, travelling around the circle. Each child repeating the previous list in order and adding one more item of their choice. If a child leaves out an item they are 'out'.

## **Activity: Milk & Meat**

One of the important aspects of Kashrut is to keep milk and meat properly separated. This is derived from the verse in the parsha this week which says, "Do not cook a kid in its mother's milk." This verse appears in the Torah three times. The Sages explain that the repetition of the verse teaches us that it is not only forbidden to cook meat and milk together, but it's also forbidden to then eat or derive benefit from the mixture.

Hide lots of pictures around the room of foods made from milk, foods made from meat, vegetables, fruit, snacks and drinks. Split the children into groups and give them the task of collecting the pictures. When time is up give each group a paper/plastic plate and ask them to create a meat meal on their plate and a milk meal on their plate, using their pictures. You can also add another plate for the children to create a dessert. Ask the children for feedback and show everyone what they have created. Ask the

groups to judge the meals of the other groups and decide if they have completed the task correctly.

### Children's Service: Years 3- 6

- Please check the activities written in the age group above as some of them may be suitable for your service too.
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**Activity:** Moshe ascends Mount Sinai and remains there- Don't lose what you tried hard to achieve

Split up your participants into a few different groups. Explain that there is a millionaire on his death bed who is looking to pass on his fortune to a worthy Jewish cause. Each group must come up with and present their idea to everyone else through song, skit, or any other creative way they can. They must come up with their ideal Jewish programme for children their age to prove to the millionaire that they are the group that deserves all the money. Things to include are facilities, resources, programming, staff, and anything else they can come up with to make their programme stand out. They'll work on it for a certain amount of time and then each group will present their idea describing what sets them apart and why they deserve the grant. You can set up a committee of group leaders to be the judges on who deserves the grant or you could be the judge. You can also even have one of the group leaders come in as a lawyer representing the millionaire or dress up as the old man.

## Discuss

At the end of Parshat Mishpatim we read that God tells Moshe to “ascent to Me to the mountain and remain there”. Although Moshe did not need this lesson there is a very important message here that we can learn. Many people strive hard to reach great spiritual heights and when they succeed they relax and fall back to their old practices. This is what God implied to Moshe. Come up to the mountain and reach the great heights of spiritual attainment. God adds, however, that Moshe should remain there, that he should retain that height at all times. Moshe, indeed, did not need that warning. It was given to him so that we should take notice and we should remember to retain the levels that we reach from time to time. We often strive to reach certain worthy goals and when we succeed we relax and fall back a few steps. We stop striving and we regress. We must always remember that if something is worth fighting for it is also worth holding on to. Don't lose what you already gained. Each group had a certain goal in mind and they were willing to do anything for it. But the question is, once you receive your grant, do you stop working as hard or do you now work even harder to use what you've gained and take it to an even higher level?